



Juvenile Justice Commission

Update

Fall 2004

Vol. 3 Issue 2

Message from the Executive Director



Howard L. Beyer

The New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC) strives to return youth to their communities as productive members of society. Everything is done with that goal in mind. For some youth that means rekindling an interest in school; for others, it means finding a full-time job; for still others, it may mean overcoming drug addiction. No matter the specific circumstances, the JJC knows that these youth continue to need support after they leave its facilities. The JJC's Office of Juvenile Parole and Transitional Services (JP&TS) makes sure that young people get back into school, continue to receive counseling, and adhere to individualized plans to help them readjust to life in their communities.

In New Jersey, juvenile parole is not something that starts on a juvenile's first day back home. It begins the first day a juvenile walks into a JJC program. The

JJC's Office of Parole and Transitional Services has stepped up to the plate and taken on new and expanded roles. This edition of *JJC Update* details some of the innovative programs that the JJC is implementing through the Office of JP&TS to help address the needs of youth returning home.

The JJC's dedicated parole officers face enormous challenges in the community. These highly trained men and women tackle some of the most difficult and sometimes dangerous jobs in the JJC. They know that in order to help young people change their lives, the words, "It's not my job," cannot be in their vocabulary. Time and time again these men and women go above and beyond the call of duty.

I want to personally thank William Curry, Director of the Office of Juvenile Parole and Transitional Services. Mr. Curry recognizes that his office, with the support of our State's communities, has a shared responsibility to keep young people on the right track. He has devoted himself to helping youth succeed, whether that means meeting with community members, faith-based organizations, local law enforcement officers, school administrators,

Howard L. Beyer
Executive Director
Thomas Flanagan
Deputy Executive Director

Directors:

- Jack Amberg, Office of Education
- Wimson Crespo, Office of Investigations
- William Curry, Office of Juvenile Parole and Transitional Services
- Rosanne Fairbanks, Office of Administration
- Lisa Macaluso, Office of Local Programs and Services
- Brigitte Mitchell-Morton, Office of Resident Care

or anyone else who expresses an interest in seeing troubled youth succeed. Under his direction, the JJC's Office of Juvenile Parole & Transitional Services has been nationally recognized for its efforts.

The issue of reentry — the transition from confinement back into the community — has gained national attention as states throughout the country try to identify ways to help both adult inmates, and youth involved in the juvenile justice system, return home successfully. The JJC is part of that national dialogue. I am pleased to share with you some of the JJC's recent successes, and new initiatives, that are helping to turn around the lives of some of New Jersey's most troubled youth.

NEWS FLASH

The JJC is Selected as a National Leader

The JJC has been selected as a member of the National Governors Academy for Reentry. In this role, the JJC meets with its counterparts from six other states to exchange information, to collaborate, and to develop initiatives that help youth transition from confinement and reenter society.

The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices launched the Pris-

oner Reentry State Policy Academy in an effort to help participating states develop effective prisoner reentry strategies designed to reduce costly recidivism rates by improving pre-and-post release services. New Jersey was selected as one of seven states to take part in this intensive, 18-month program.

The goal of the policy academy is to teach states how to help former inmates and juvenile

residents successfully reconnect with society. The challenge is to teach individuals to avoid patterns of negative behavior by providing key supports and services in a timely fashion within a framework that emphasizes public safety, strong families and stable communities.

The JJC is proud to be a part of this critical national initiative.

Realizing Potential & Changing Futures

Uth Turn

Turning Youths' Futures Around

Howard L. Beyer, Executive Director of the Juvenile Justice Commission joined Attorney General Peter C. Harvey; Dr. M. William Howard, Pastor of Bethany Baptist Church; C. Vernon Mason, Executive Director of Uth Turn, staff, volunteers and youth from the Essex Residential Community Home (Essex RCH) to launch "Uth Turn". The press conference was held at Bethany Baptist Church in Newark, the site of the "Uth Turn" Program.

Attorney General Peter C. Harvey said, "Uth Turn is an important initiative for the positive development of youth in New Jersey's Juvenile Justice system. The statistics for youth in need of guidance and mentorship in urban communities is staggering. Young people need guidance, direction, mentorship and a roadmap for social development. What we have done with Uth Turn is taken a program that combines a strong foundation and track record of changing the lives of participants in New York's Uth Turn Program, modified it and brought it to New Jersey to serve youth here."

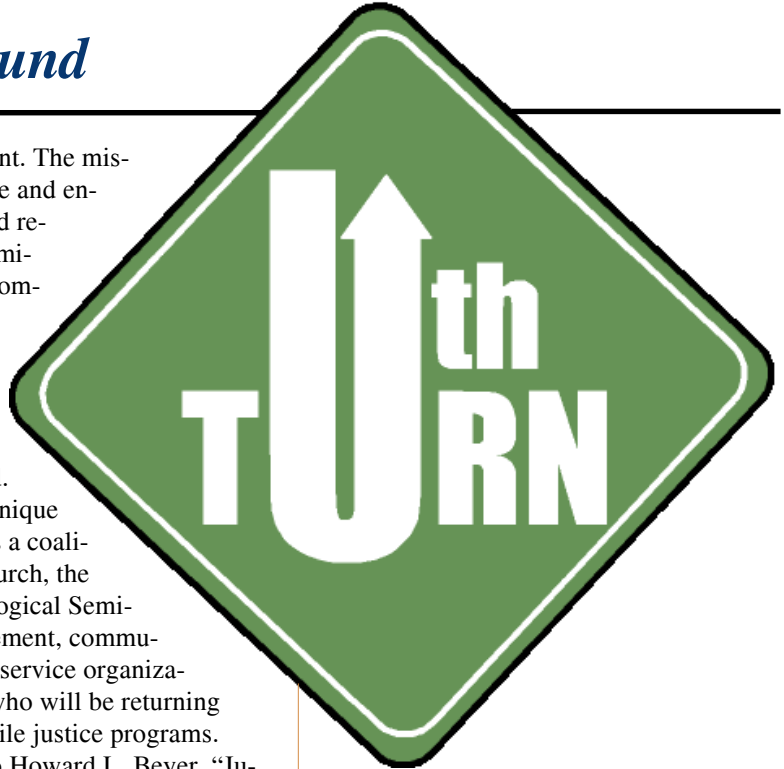
Uth Turn is a unique program being offered for the first time in New Jersey. The program, which began in New York in 1999, was created by as a program of the Fund for Community Leadership Development, based at New York Theological Seminary, where Dr. Howard

served as President. The mission is to combine and engage the untapped resources of economically depressed communities to help youth affected by the criminal justice system to turn their lives around.

The program is unique because it creates a coalition of a local church, the New York Theological Seminary, law enforcement, community based social service organizations and youth who will be returning home from juvenile justice programs.

According to Howard L. Beyer, "Juv-eniles face great challenges when they transition from the structure of a juvenile justice program to the relative freedom of home. Making that reentry process successful is not possible without the assistance of dedicated individuals like Dr. Howard and the mentors from Bethany Baptist Church. With their help, we can make sure that these young men have the support and the guidance they need to be successful."


Dr. Howard said, "The goal of Uth Turn is to assist residents of the Essex Residential Community Home to reach



their potential as positive and productive members of society and to support them as they transition back into the community. The church is a beacon of light in most communities, representing hope, support, encouragement and guidance for a positive life experience." The program will provide educational services, vocational training, individual, family, and group counseling sessions as well as workshops on anger management, social development and job and career preparedness for the young men of the Essex RCH.

According to Dr. Howard, the congregation has embraced the program with members serving as mentors, counselors and life coaches for the youth. Forty-one members have volunteered to mentor residents of Essex RCH.

Reverend C. Vernon Mason said, "One of my greatest satisfactions as a minister is watching our young people turn their lives around. Therefore, on behalf of all of us at New York Theological Seminary and Uth Turn, we are excited, grateful, and filled with enthusiasm as we launch our National Pilot Project at Bethany Baptist Church in Newark, New Jersey."




Juvenile Justice Commission


Update

Fall 2004

Vol. 3 Issue 2



Richard J. Codey, Acting Governor
Peter C. Harvey, Attorney General
Howard L. Beyer, Executive Director



Editor: Sharon Lauchaire 609-292-2288 • Design: Paul Kraml 609-777-4415

Realizing Potential & Changing Futures

The Office of Juvenile Parole and Transitional Services

Many challenges face juveniles returning home after spending time in JJC programs. The JJC attempts to minimize obstacles to success and maximize opportunities.

Many young people who reach the doors of the JJC are from economically depressed communities and from troubled or dysfunctional families. Many JJC residents come from situations where positive role models and mentors are absent. Many have not attended school regularly or held a job. These factors increase the likelihood that some juveniles will get into trouble again when they return home.

JP&TS does more than simply check on parolees to make sure they are following the rules. Upon commitment to the JJC, individual plans for parole are initiated and continue to evolve until parole commences. Parole officers, educational specialists and assistant case managers form a team that works closely with each young person to make sure that he or she receives support once back home. Case plans remain flexible to allow for change as a juvenile's needs change in the community.

JP&TS works in partnership with the JJC's Offices of Education and Resident Care to outline reentry strategies specific to each youth's needs. This preparation for reentry allows appropriate resources to be identified and made available to meet the individual needs of youth.

JJC Southern Reentry Team —

Back Row (L -R) Greg Jones, Program Development Specialist; Evangeline Banks, Community Program Specialist; Patti Loukides, Supervising Community Program Specialist; Jeff Green, Youth Transition Coordinator; John Ostermueller, Senior Parole Officer; Tyrone Johnson, Pre-release Supervisor; Ishmal Velez, Senior Parole Officer. Front Row (L-R) Lonjete Garland, Child Study Team; Aneeza Fazli, Child Study Team; Alice Garcia, Child Study Team; and a family member of a JMSF resident.

The JJC knows that its residents require additional support, structure, and guidance when released from commitment. Youth may need to receive continued substance abuse counseling or perhaps, assistance with anger management. Other youth may need a ride to a job interview or assistance with re-enrolling in school. More still may require assistance with family and other personal circumstances. The JJC is there to make sure these things happen.

JP&TS has expanded its efforts with local community organizations, faith-based groups, school officials, volunteers, and law enforcement partners to establish points of collaboration that meet the goals of the JJC and the needs of the youth. The efforts of JP&TS provide a safety net and valuable resources for youth that include surveillance, enforcement, treatment, and support.

The Office of Juvenile Parole and Transitional Services is dedicated to its core values of **Community, Accountability, Respect and Enforcement (CARE)**.



William Curry, Director of Juvenile Parole and Transitional Services



REGIONAL OPERATIONS

The JJC's Office of JP&TS has three regional offices: north, central, and south. This allocates responsibilities throughout the state and ensures that parole services are delivered more effectively and efficiently. In addition, it allows for strong community partnerships to develop to more effectively meet the needs of youth. Each region partners with local law enforcement and collaborates with social service agencies in the area.

Each regional office also serves as a reporting center where parolees can meet with their assigned officer or other staff as needed.

New Initiatives

Many new initiatives have been undertaken recently by JP&TS to meet the diverse needs of youth. In many instances, these are implemented on a regional basis, bringing together community providers and resources unique to that area. In other instances, when the scope of the initiative has broader applications, their implementation has been statewide. Below are brief descriptions of several of these initiatives.

“Going Home - The Serious and Violent Offenders Reentry Initiative”

The JJC is proud to have been selected as a recipient of the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, “*Going Home - The Serious and Violent Offenders Reentry Initiative*” (SVORI) Grant. The SVORI grant will enable the JJC to redesign the parole and transition process for those youth best described as serious and violent offenders. With this grant, the JJC will be able to better address individual needs and gaps in service for those youth who may pose the greatest risk for re-offending.

In New Jersey, the “*Going Home - The Serious and Violent Offenders Reentry Initiative*” is a partnership between the State Parole Board, the Department of Corrections and the JJC. The JP&TS reentry team identifies candidates who meet the grant's criteria and develops comprehensive release plans. The terms of each release plan become special conditions of the juvenile's parole. The team implements the plan upon the juvenile's release. Individual progress is assessed and monitored during weekly team reviews. The team may amend the plan at any time to adjust for a parolee's needs and to implement the required changes. Adjustment sessions, in which a State Parole Board Hearing Officer and the reentry team participate, are held with those parolees who demonstrate difficulty adjusting to their conditions of parole or to their case plans. Plans can be

amended, new conditions of parole can be added, or where warranted, a parolee can be returned to custody.

Early successes of this initiative include 15 students being readmitted to high school, and the registration of several others at alternative education sites. Two students - one from Camden County and another from Essex County, which are target sites for the initiative — are now attending college.

SVORI has the potential to guide youth to a positive lifestyle that is crime-free and to help them become responsible adults. The JJC is helping to make that a reality in New Jersey.

JP&TS' Expanded Role in Education

Many JJC youth returning home encounter difficulties returning to school. Often schools are hesitant to re-enroll students who were once disruptive and unfocused. In an effort to assist local school districts that have a high number of parolees attending classes, the JJC now places juvenile parole officers and juvenile parole staff in schools in the city of Camden.

School administrators in Camden have welcomed parole officers into their schools. Their presence has helped smooth the readmittance process for school administrators and youth. Not only do JJC parole officers cut through the red tape and help parolees stay on the right track once back in school, but they also mediate problems and assist other at-risk students. The juvenile parole officers and staff stay actively

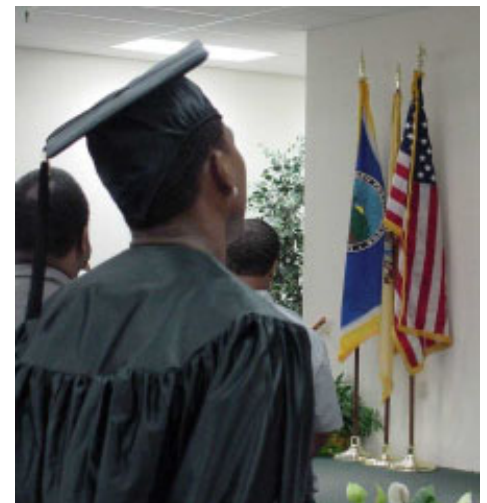
involved to ensure that each student receives the attention he or she needs to get back into school and stay on track. This strong and intimate parole presence has been responsible, in part, for improved student performance and school attendance.

Jerrothia Riggs Transitional School

Even when students are accepted back into their school district, returning to school is one of the more difficult transitions for youth. While many students flourish in JJC educational programs, they remain nervous about returning to traditional school environments. The JJC and the Camden School District have partnered to resolve this long standing issue.

The dedication of the Jerrothia Riggs Transitional School, as a school specifically for parolees returning to Camden schools, removes many of the traditional roadblocks youth face when returning to school. Now, all JJC residents returning to Camden spend 90 days at the Riggs School to help them transition back into Camden's high schools. Youth are immediately enrolled in the school after leaving a JJC program, allowing for a seamless transition. Once at the Riggs School, an individual education plan is developed for those seeking to return to either Woodrow Wilson High School or Camden High.

Student from the Riggs Transitional School pledges allegiance during his graduation ceremony.



*James Patterson, Pre-release Case Manager and
Pamela Kole, Transitional Education Specialist use
the JJC's video conferencing system.*

At this time, the Riggs School is considering expanding the term beyond the original 90 day plan. An expansion of the program would mean that youth could complete their education at Riggs, which is a part of the Camden school district, without the disruption of a transfer to another school. Due to the success of this initiative, additional opportunities, such as culinary arts, are being explored to enhance program offerings.

The Comprehensive Adjustment Program

The Comprehensive Adjustment Program (CAP) is an excellent example of collaboration between a private provider, in this case Genesis Counseling, and a State agency. Through this partnership, youth are registered and placed in a day treatment program that addresses educational needs, provides counseling, and helps secure employment. CAP has a strong academic program intensified by a vocational component that places students as apprentices to gain work experience. Through this partnership, the youth develop new relationships with their peers and with community members, while rekindling their interest in schooling. Several students have chosen to continue on at CAP after their parole period has ended.

Summer School

Traditionally, schools do not allow youth returning to the community to re-enroll near the end of the school year. While returning to school immediately helps ensure that a juvenile will continue his or her education, the JJC has few options but to assist youth in finding summer employment and then strive to re-enroll them in school beginning the next school year. This summer, the JJC piloted a summer school project to fill the gap for Camden parolees.

This summer, the Jerrothia Riggs Transitional School was available to students for summer school. The successful existing partnership in Camden made available the classrooms and the teachers necessary to continue classes during the summer months. The JJC is exploring this initiative for other school districts for future summers.



Hopeworks, Inc.

Hopeworks Inc. is another successful example of the JJC's efforts to identify non-traditional community partners to meet the needs of youth. Hopeworks uses technology to reach at-risk juveniles or juveniles returning to the community from JJC programs.

Through this collaboration, youth learn highly sought after career skills, including web site design and Global Information System (G.I.S.) mapping techniques. Not only do the participants receive state-of-the-art technological instruction, they also develop improved self-respect, self-discipline, respect for others, and team building skills.

Youth have expressed a high level of interest in these exciting and promising fields. Career development services at Hopeworks provide youth with the incentive to explore these careers and pursue these interests at Camden Community College or other four-year colleges.

Video Conferencing Helps Create Reentry Plans

A factor closely associated with parole success is engaging parents, guardians and other community support groups in the reentry process. The technology of video conferencing conveniently allows the various parties to take part in discussions about what is needed

to help an individual youth succeed.

Video conferencing is available at convenient sites in each region and affords accessibility to parole officers, service providers, parents, law enforcement officers, and others essential to planning each youth's individual reentry plan. Video conferencing provides the opportunity for joint planning that otherwise would be very difficult to coordinate. By taking advantage of this technology, potential stumbling blocks to a successful reentry are avoided.

Community Policing Partnerships

JP&TS' Central Region Parole Office has developed networks of community policing collaborations. At this time, there are six partnering jurisdictions: Elizabeth, Asbury Park, Perth Amboy, New Brunswick, Plainfield, and the Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office. The improved communication has developed allows local police to be aware of juveniles in their community who have been assigned to parole. In turn, they can advise parole officers of specific observations that may require intervention. By increasing the cooperation and communication between JJC parole staff, police, and prosecutors, parole supervision efficiency and enhanced officer safety have improved.

continued on next page

continued from previous page

Ron Phillips, JJC Youth Transitional Coordinator helps youth plan his future.

Plainfield Anti-Violence Community Council

The Plainfield Anti-Violence Community Council seeks to improve community awareness by bringing together schools, police, and faith-based groups in their community. The council provides valuable services to juveniles returning home and collaborates with the JJC in order to provide a forum for discussions with the community.

Understanding the important role that education plays in a young person's success, the Plainfield Anti-Violence Community Council works with the board of education and the local high schools to help streamline the process by which youth return to school. It then strives to help keep students engaged in school and the learning process. Other important services that the Council delivers include: family education, parenting, and job readiness services.

As part of their relationship with the JJC, the Plainfield Anti-Violence Community Council provides gang information and prevention resources to community groups and schools. One very successful component of this initiative has been Gang Awareness Night, during which JJC staff provide information, and address questions and concerns from members of the community about gangs.

Paterson Village Initiative

Strong community partnerships and inter-agency cooperation can help create safer communities. The Paterson Village Initiative began with this concept in mind. In 1998, the JJC's Office of Juvenile Parole and Transitional Services and its partners, the local police and probation unit, joined forces to actively change their community. Loosely modeled after Boston's successful Night Light project, the multi-agency team began conducting community meetings in housing developments, intensely monitoring JJC parolees, providing additional support to families, and assisting the Paterson police gang suppression effort.

JP&TS has increased its presence in the community by participating in neighborhood clean ups, serving dinner to senior citizens, and distributing toys to children in need.



The Paterson Village Initiative has consistently maintained its focus and has gained community respect and support. The continued success of this program encouraged JP&TS to replicate the Paterson Village Initiative in Elizabeth by expanding existing relationships already established with the Elizabeth Police Department.

In Conclusion

Parole and aftercare services are changing. Parole is no longer viewed as a series of curfew checks and drug tests. It is no longer a cookie cutter plan with the same services for each youth on parole.

Today, juvenile parole is a comprehensive process that allows young people to continue the progress they have made in a secure or residential settings, while learning to face the challenges they encounter as they seek to be successful in their community. Parole plans are personalized so that one young person may receive addi-

tional substance abuse counseling, while another attends workshops to help prevent gang involvement. Parole is a partnership between law enforcement, community organizations, and leaders that ensures that young people have responsible adults to look up to and to help them grow into independent successful members of their communities.

New Jersey has become a national leader, providing services that strengthen families, help youth return to school, locate employment opportunities, and identify treatment services. Through the JJC's strong partnerships with community leaders, local law enforcement, non-profit organizations, service providers, and individuals interested in helping youth succeed, the Juvenile Justice Commission is changing futures.

In the Next Edition >>>

**The JJC's Efforts to
Combat Substance Abuse**

Realizing Potential & Changing Futures